

No place like 'home'

WR's Parker having outstanding freshman season at Bloomsburg

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By Chris Nagy

BLOOMSBURG—Growing up Taylor Parker always dreamed of graduating high school and going to college as far away from home as possible.

"When I was little I always wanted to go to California to college to play softball," she said. "As I got older, I kept getting closer and closer to home."

And where she ended up couldn't be any closer.

Parker, the Warrior Run graduate who was a two-time Standard Journal All-Area girls softball player of the year, decided to take her talents a short drive down I-80 from Dewart to Bloomsburg University to play for the Huskies.

"I'm really happy that I chose Bloomsburg," said Parker. "It's close to home and that means my parents and my friends can come and watch me play."

And they have had a lot to watch and cheer for this season. The freshman burst onto the scene this year at Bloom and had a year to remember.

"When I decided on Bloomsburg I didn't know if I was going to start, let alone play," Parker said. "It's really an honor to be able to play as a freshman on the college level."

She started 18 games in the circle and had three relief appearances. She also completed every game she started. She finished with a 1.57 ERA and five shutouts. She struck out 94 and walked just 38. She finished the regular season with a 13-7 record.



Bloomsburg University freshman and Warrior Run graduate Taylor Parker gets ready to catch a ball during a game last week at Jan Hutchinson field. Parker has become the No. 1 pitcher for the Huskies and also plays shortstop when she isn't in the circle.



Parker gets ready to deliver a pitch.

Parker became the No. 1 pitcher early in the season and carried that spot through PSAC play.

"I knew I had to work hard everyday to even get a chance to play," she said. "I remember the day I was warming up and the coaching staff came up to me and told me I was going to start. "I was surprised but the coaches have a lot of confidence in me."

But Parker's day isn't done after she pitches the first game of the doubleheaders that are normal in the PSAC. She then moves to shortstop for the second game.

As she did in high school, Parker remains a dual threat not just with her arm but with her bat. She finished the regular season with a .307 average and had nine doubles and four home runs. She scored 25 runs and knocked in 22.

"Leaving high school I knew it was going to be a big step up on the college level," she said. "The competition was different—something I wasn't used to and at a higher level than I was used to."

Another key to Parker's success has been the relationship she has forged with Bloomsburg head coach Susan Kocher.

It's not out of the ordinary for Kocher to come out of the dugout between innings to discuss how the things went in the circle with her freshman hurler.

"Coach is always there for me," said Parker. "She really helps me through games."

With a regular season behind her and the Huskies ready for the PSAC playoffs which begin Thursday, Parker has adjusted to college on and off the field.

"Coming to college I was scared," she said. "It has been a lot of fun getting to know everybody on the team and making friends. It's been a lot of fun and I enjoy playing with my teammates. I don't want to play with anybody else."

Bloomsburg finished the regular season 26-15 and earned the No. 2 seed out of the Eastern Division. The Huskies will play Gannon, the No. 3 seed from the west, at 11am Thursday at Veterans Park in Quakertown.



Bloomsburg University head softball coach Susan Kocher, right, talks to freshman pitcher Taylor Parker between innings of a game recently.